



Yoga-A Multifaceted Art Form

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Abstract

'Yoga' is derived from the word 'Yuj' which means 'to join'. On a theistic basis it can be defined as the union of individual and supreme consciousness. While on a secular mode it can mean the mind's concentration on a specific action. These definitions point to yogasastras which once existed in India. In later years 'theism' was found in Pathanjali's 'yogasashtra' and 'secularism' in 'Hadayoga Pradeepika' of 4th century.

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Relationship of Asanas with performance arts and Matrial arts

Yogasutra and Hadayoga make use of asanas to attain specific results. The posture that gives happiness to both body and mind is known as asana. Other than the traditional forms of asanas like 'Padmasana', 'Mayurasana', 'Shirshasana' many new forms of asanas have also come into existence. 'Suryanamaskaram' is a combination of different asanas.

Many aspects of martial arts and other performance arts mingle harmoniously with these asanas. Yogasana, which is a combination of two words-yoga and asana, is not merely a vision but a blend of different subjects that have grown and developed through different ages. The expression of the concept of Yoga in Bhagavadgita. Bhagavadgita differentiates between knowledge, Karma and devotion, with a Philosophical perspective at the back drop. In Bhagavadgita, Upanishads are interpreted as one that can influence all aspects of Indian life. This has given rise to different yogic concepts.

Many yogas like Raja yoga (Jananayoga, Dhyanayoga), Karmayoga, Upasanayoga, Anasakthiyoga, Manthra yoga (Japayoga), Laya yoga, Kundalini yoga, Hadayoga etc were formed later. In most of these the yogic steps shows the attitude of the person while practicing it. Yoga is not mere knowledge or practice or devotion. Instead it means doing one's duty without expecting any returns so as to attain one's aim (moksha). The influence of this vision can be seen even during India's freedom struggle.

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Pathanjala Yoga : A mokshashastra

According to Pathanjali "Yoga means controlling one's mental thoughts and activities. A major portion of the practices involve physical activities while most of them are mental exercises. Through continuous exercise we will come to know how mind is deeply related to body".

'Yoga' as said in the religious explanation of the word, is the conjoining of the individual and supreme consciousness. Indian teachers who realized the universal truth of supreme consciousness formulated new methods to help others to attain that truth. Of these the most important is Pathanjali, yogashastra (rules of meditation). Later this sastra along with Kapila's Sankhyadarsana gave way to a new vision and is now regarded as one among the six visions of yogashastra.

Pathanjaliyoga which is also known as Ashtangayoga (Rajayoga, Jnanayoga) has eight parts such as -yama, Niyama, Aasana, Pranayama, Prathyahara, Dharsana, Dhyana, Samadhi. The last one Samadhi (deep meditation) has two different forms-Samprajna, Samadhi and Asam, Prajna, Samadhi. Inorder to attain moksha one should reach Asamprajna the Samadhi which is part of supreme consciousness. Spiritual teachers regarded yogasanas as one of the steps to attain supreme consciousness.

Hadayoga: as a Physical Science

Hadayoga is not a plan from philosophical perspective. It is mere planning of bodily activities and its aim is to bring a sort of hardness to both body and mind. The figure of a person in a meditating posture found among the relics of Saindhava culture proves the existence of 'Yogasana' from ancient times. According to Richard King Hadayoga originated by about 9th century B.C. An attempt to make Hadayoga a part of Pathanjali can be seen in 'Hadayoga deepika'. These kinds of attempts to blend the physical and spiritual parts were

done in almost all ages.

Hadayoga which is a combination of Asana, Pranayama, Karana and Sadanusandhana gives more importance to the curbing of physical and spiritual activities. The letters 'Ha' in 'Hada' represents 'breath air' and 'da' stands for vital airs and Hadayoga is the merging of both these airs. But in yogashika Upanishad (1, 133) it is defined as the merging of sun and moon that reflects the male and female qualities present in every human beings. "Kundalini" yoga is a part of Hadayoga. Thus a belief in this branch of knowledge, in which legend and mysticism mixed with belief and passed orally through exaggerated rendering, can be seen even among tribal society. "A religion or belief is not required for the study of Rajayoga. Rajayoga advises not to believe in anything until it is seen or experienced on one's own".

Asana – As a Physical art

Yogasana, formed from two words yoga and asana, is a blend of different subjects that have grown and developed through different ages. From this, asanas are put into use for different purposes through ages. Because of this, asanas can be separated from Ashtanga Hadayoga and can be practiced as a Physical art that can give better results than other forms of physical exercises. Research conducted in this field also substantiates this fact. Many westerners see yoga as a variation of modern concept of health and fitness and a means of overcoming the stresses and strains of modern day living. Most of what passes for yoga in this context, however, bears little relation to traditional practices.

Mystery and misunderstanding about yogasana has prevented many from practising yoga whole through their life. Modern instructors of yoga and their books have also played a greater role in dissuading the masses from observing yoga practices. Jean and Helen Parkar in their book "Yoga Time" has vividly described about this. "The common tendency of writers on yoga is to add obscure mysticism and difficult practices which for a while interest the new disciple of yoga; but as he dives deep into the subject, he is usually frightened away

According to Swami Vivekananda it is modern interpreters who make yogasastra more mysterious one. If there is anything mysterious or secret in yoga it should be rejected at the earliest. Mental Strength and its acquisition is one of the major concerns of life. Attraction towards the secret aspects will lessen human intelligence. This has destroyed one of the major branches of science-yoga sastra. If the interpreter is a new comer the chances for making mistakes will increase. If the while the instructor is very old he will be more tactful and will be able to convey the correct yogic practices".

It is not surprising that this scientific discipline appear to be a mysterious one, for it aims to bring about spiritual development in the student, when it is practiced as a means to attain moksha. But when yoga is practiced

as a mere exercise there is no need to follow any rules or discipline. It's enough to consider and practice it as any other exercise.

The need of this age

Modern research studies proves that Modern man, who finds himself amidst various complex problems of life, can resort to yogasana as a form of Physical art, that can relieve him from all kinds of stress and strain, Simon and Schuster in their book 'Sivandanda Companion to yoga', says that continuous practise of yoga will naturally lead to the progress of one's mind.

Many people are first drawn to yoga as a way to keep their bodies fit. Others come seeking relief from a specific complaint, like tension or backache. Some are merely impelled by a sense that they are not getting as much out of life as they could be. Whatever your reasons, Yoga can be a tool, an instrument-giving you both what you come for, and more ... At first glance it seems to be like little more than a series of strange physical postures.... But in course of time, anyone who continues with regular practice becomes aware of a subtle change in their approach to life. Through persistent toning and relaxing the body and concentrating the mind, you begin to glimpse a state of inner peace which is your true nature. It is this that constitutes the essence of yoga-this self relaxation that we are all seeking, consciously or unconsciously, and towards which we are all gradually evolving.

Yogasanam can be practised during any stage of life. 'Hadayoga Pradeepa' has distinctly stated that yoga is most suited for patients and for those who are weak and fragile by nature.

Some of the positive factors of yoga are: Most of them can be practised without the help of an instructor, especially the simple ones, by making use of yogic books illustrations depicted in it.

The Positive effects of Yogic Practices

- These yogic practices correct and regulate the actions of heart, lungs, brain, liver, kidneys, testes etc.... intact all the organs of the body. They ward off brain tags, heart trouble, lung diseases, urinary disorders, digestive troubles, and sexual diseases, at the same time giving a general toning to all internal organs. They exercise all the internal organs thoroughly and make the ductless gland secrete. This working up of the ductless glands is unique characteristics of the yoga system.
- When most of the Physical art make muscles more rigid, yogasanas make it a flexible one.
- Yogic instructors have formulated practices in such a way as to have a control over both body and mind. Therefore continuous practice of yoga enables to have a control over one's mind as well.
- Along with asanas breathing exercise is also recommended which helps to have a control over breathing process and other similar benefits.

- Yogasanas conserve energy while other exercise expel bodily energy. Due to this, those who practice yoga need have only a little amount of food. As per naturopathy diet control is part of this treatment.
- Asanas are best for reducing the excess fat and also to give stamina to muscles.
- If patients practice yoga under the instructions of a teacher they can pacify most of their diseases. For healthy persons it acts as preventive treatment.
- For a person who continuously practices yoga need not do any extra mental exercise to enhance concentration, because he acquires it automatically through constant practice of yoga.
- Above all yoga can be practiced even during leisure hours without having bad effects of any sort.
- “Attentiveness to posture, even as per western reductionist principles, is a sound physiological advice. Correct posture is necessary to facilitate the flow of vital energy or breath (prana) throughout the body and helps to maintain correct state of consciousness increased flow of oxygen to the brain explains some of the altered states of consciousness attained by yoga practitioners.

Conclusion

Regular exercise is necessary for both physical and mental health. Other than the normal exercises like running, Swimming etc and other Physical arts like martial arts, weight lifting, gymnastics, yogasana etc can also be regarded as exercises. When taken from broader perspective each one can engage themselves in the exercises that they feel will suite them. But yogasanam has got its own quality that stands out.

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